



Broadway Boulevard, Euclid to Country Club

MEMORANDUM

TO: Broadway Boulevard Citizens Task Force

FROM: Jenn Toothaker Burdick, Project Manager

DATE: July 18, 2013

RE: **Information about the Ronstadt Transit Center Site Redevelopment and Downtown Links Projects**

A request was made during the May 2013 Broadway planning charrette for more information about the Downtown Links and Ronstadt Transit Center redevelopment projects. Both projects are near the Broadway: Euclid to Country Club project area and relate to vehicular and transit mobility and planning. The following summaries provide the statuses of these projects, calling out selected aspects of these projects that relate to the connectivity and interoperability with the Broadway project. **Please note that presentations are NOT agendaized for the July 25, 2013 CTF meeting to allow more time for Broadway-specific planning and design discussions; however, 15 minutes has been set aside to allow CTF members to ask questions of City staff.**

RONSTADT TRANSIT CENTER SITE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A proposed redevelopment of Tucson's downtown transit hub, known as the Ronstadt Transit Center, is being considered by the community, the Mayor and Council, and the City of Tucson. Corky Poster of *Poster Frost Mirto* was hired to lead a community planning process to develop a vision and a set of development goals for the redevelopment of the Ronstadt Transit Center property. There were two 'givens' about the process: that the transit center function would remain within the Ronstadt Transit Center master planning area (see Figure 1.), and that private development/investment be added to the site.

In April, 2013, a series of public meetings, stakeholder meetings, and surveys were conducted. Past proposals for the Ronstadt Transit Center site were compiled, including the relocation of the Greyhound Bus Station. Information about other mixed-use transit facilities around northern America was researched and documented.

On May 24, 2013, a report compiling all of these elements was issued by the City of Tucson. The development goals constructed from the community interactions and commentary are found on pages 8-9 of the online PDF document, attached, and the entire document can be found online at: http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/files/citymgr/Final_RTC_Community_Planning_Process_5.24.2013.pdf

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RONSTADT TRANSIT CENTER SITE REDEVELOPMENT AND DOWNTOWN LINKS PROJECTS

JULY 18, 2013

Two public hearings on the issue of the site redevelopment are in the process of being scheduled by the City Manager's Office, and will tentatively occur in September 2013. The proposed next steps would be:

- 1) To issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a development team with expertise in, and the financial ability to construct, a mixed-use transit facility, with a goal of short-listing companies by the end of calendar year 2013.
- 2) Upon short-listing of qualified development teams, it is anticipated that community input on project concepts and design would be solicited.
- 3) Concurrent with the RFQ process, Pima Association of Governments and City of Tucson will conduct a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of the transit services and operations.
- 4) A Request for Proposals (RFP) would be issued for specific design proposals once the RFQ short-list and Comprehensive Operational Analysis are completed.
- 5) Upon selection of an approved design, construction could begin.

Figure 1. Map of the Ronstadt Transit Center Master Planning Area



Exhibit 1. Ronstadt Transit Center Redevelopment Goals (5/24/2013)

Ronstadt Transit Center Redevelopment Goals

- The phrase that was common to the *Bus Riders Union* and to the *Downtown Tucson Partnership* (Merchants Sub-Committee) is that "Downtown is for Everyone." The greater Ronstadt Transit Center site should be successfully transformed to accommodate new development for a variety of mixed uses at the same time as it can provide an efficient and pleasant downtown transportation hub for all Tucsonans.
- Ronstadt needs to not just be a transit center, but must evolve into a transportation center for public buses, the Modern Streetcar, bicycles and bike-share, pedestrians, car-share, "park-once" parking, inter-city train, inter-city buses, vans, shuttles, taxis, kiss-and-ride, and other forms of transportation evolving and changing.
- The needs and operations of Sun Tran are also changing and evolving. Sun Tran is in the process of developing a detailed and thorough on-board survey and operational plan in the Fall of 2013. The new transportation center, and the developer chosen for its redevelopment, must work closely with Sun Tran as it develops its short term and long-term operational plan. The process needs to move slowly enough for this Sun Tran planning process to develop.
- The redevelopment of this site needs to be a win for transit users. Level of service, efficiency, quality, much-improved comfort and amenities, and convenience for the transit user needs to improve significantly as a result of this project.
- The short-term and long-term needs of Sun Tran must be satisfied within any redevelopment proposal.
- The potential development uses for this site will be driven to a large extent by the feasibility of land uses in the marketplace. Proposed uses should be in accordance with community desires, but in the end, development will be driven by what feasible uses can pencil out on this site. The Tucson community needs to be flexible and open-minded in its evaluation of proposed uses for this site. Developers need to be creative and thoughtful in their proposals. Projects that meet a local downtown need for services and activities will be most welcomed.
- Views on appropriate new land uses for the Ronstadt Transit Center site vary. Additional student housing in non-adaptable suite formats is not well supported, but market-rate housing and workforce housing would be a key component for redevelopment. Educational uses, commercial/retail uses, public health, food(grocery and food carts), urban conveniences, open space, and adequate parking would all be among welcome uses.
- The need for urban open space on this site has been expressed by all stakeholders in this community process. This open space will only be successful if it is urban in character, is highly used by the community, is integrated in an active well-used commercial setting, and has lots of eyes and ears on the space. It will not work as an urban open space if it is allowed to function as neutral territory with no sense of community ownership and oversight.
- As the specific location of transit and other transportation facilities is considered, it must be remembered that the Modern Streetcar will connect at the RTC's southern boundary. Proximity to the Streetcar connection will be important. As the distance from the Streetcar to other forms of transportation increases, the quality of the experience between the two needs to also increase. Said another way, if the distance between the two is long the connection needs to be very interesting and comfortable for pedestrians.
- The real estate deal that emerges from this process will not be easy and it is likely to be high-risk. It will require substantial pre-leasing. It will also require substantial incentives by the public sector to reduce risk. Incentives will need to be aggressive. The best incentives will be programmatic, regulatory, financial and political. Actual cash investment of public funds will be more difficult to undertake in the current tight budget and economy.
- The architecture should be exciting with a strong connection to Tucson. It should be place-specific. The arts should play a big role in the new development. Day and night uses are

- The needs of the downtown neighborhoods should paramount in the redevelopment. Developers, Sun Tran, and the City of Tucson must commit to an ongoing dialogue and negotiation with neighborhoods.
- The development process needs to be carefully vetted and analyzed. This is not a time for hunches and guesses. The next change to this site will be for a long time and needs to be done carefully.
- The site will develop under a City/Developer development agreement. The City of Tucson needs to dramatically improve its ability to create effective development agreement documents. This document needs to be the best of its kind with milestones, timelines, and deliverables that protect the public's interest in this site.
- Traffic needs to be a careful element of any redevelopment plan. Teams considered need excellent and creative traffic (especially transit) engineering consultants to insure an orderly flow of vehicles of all types in the downtown area.
- The greater Ronstadt Transit Center site is in the midst of an historic downtown. The historic urban fabric should be maintained. Efforts should be made to avoid closing Pennington or Toole. The historic brick arcade façade and the Melody Peters ceramic public art should be maintained if possible. Historic building massing, scale, rhythm, and streetscape should be maintained along Congress and 6th Avenue as much as possible. These streets should be largely filled in as they historically were, but with permeable entries on 6th Avenue and Congress. The Tucson Pima County Historic Commission should be involved in this design process.
- Care and protection should be given to local downtown businesses. Efforts should be made to avoid existing business displacement. Downtown merchant should be involved in the process of development of this site.
- Developers considered should be experienced in public/private partnerships, urban mixed-use, and transit-oriented development. They should demonstrate a commitment to transparency, consensus building, and strong/positive government relationships.
- A two-stage process for the selection of a developer is recommended. Stage One would be a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) with general information on the project goals and objectives. It would request the submitter to describe skills and qualifications of team members, similar project experience, references, demonstrate understanding of the project, and propose a general project approach. From the Stage One submitters, up to three developers would be selected. They would move to Stage Two Request for Proposals (RFP). They would be given a very much more detailed project description, elements, and requirements and would be asked to propose a specific preliminary design, cost estimate, pro forma, incentive package, tangible benefits to City (sales tax, multiplier, jobs, etc.), timeline, etc., for the development of this site. The City should consider a modest (\$15,000 per team?) stipend to offset the costs of this proposal preparation.
- The timeline for the RFQ/RFP should be deliberate not fast. It should coincide with the completion of the Sun Tran Operational Study expected by the end of November. RFQ could be September – November 2013. RFP could be January – April, 2014. RFP's should be reviewed in a very public process.

Ronstadt Transit Center Site Redevelopment Connection to Broadway: Euclid to Country Club Project

- Broadway is the highest bus route in the region. The location of the transit center is important to supporting this route.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RONSTADT TRANSIT CENTER SITE REDEVELOPMENT AND DOWNTOWN LINKS PROJECTS

JULY 18, 2013

- Future High Capacity Transit on the Broadway corridor might benefit from using the future redeveloped Ronstadt Transit Center/multi-modal hub.

DOWNTOWN LINKS

Downtown Links is a \$76.1 million RTA-funded multimodal corridor project that links the current Barraza-Aviation Parkway to I-10, with a major extent of it paralleling the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad between 7th Avenue and Broadway Boulevard. The project is 1.3 miles long and will provide travelers trying to reach I-10 or the areas west of I-10 an option to circumvent the downtown area. To date, \$23.8 million has been expended.

Figure 2. Downtown Links Corridor Project Approved Alignment



Figure 3. Illustration of Future Conceptual Improvements Near Ronstadt Transit Center Site and Downtown Links (from Downtown Links web page, accessed 7/16/13)



The corridor project scope includes:

- 4 vehicle lanes with medians and turn lanes
- On-street bike lanes, sidewalks, and separate multi-use path
- Major drainage improvements: new Tucson Arroyo culvert
- 6th Street Underpass at the Union Pacific Railroad
- Four rail crossing upgrades to establish “no-whistle zone” eligibility
- Links Avenue bridge across 6th Avenue
- 9th Avenue deck park with public space, landscaping, art
- Native desert landscaping and passive water harvesting
- 6th Street/6th Avenue signal upgrade for two-way traffic (converting 6th Ave into 2-way traffic)
- Development of an optional Urban Overlay District (Poster-Frost-Mirto Architects – *in progress*)

The project will be constructed between 2011 and 2021 per the RTA Plan, in three phases (see the attached project update):

- Phase I: 8th Street Drainage Project. **Completed in May 2012.**
- Phase II: St. Mary’s Road, I-10 to Church Avenue Project. **Under Construction.**
- Phase III: 6th Street/Links Ave. from Church to Broadway. **Design is approximately 60% complete .**

Downtown Links Traffic Projections and Data –

< <http://www.downtownlinks.info/ReportsPresentations/TrafficStudies.aspx> >

Downtown Links is being designed per the RTA Plan scope: “Downtown Links / I-10 to Broadway Blvd.: New 4-lane urban linkage, enhanced multi-modal features, drainage and noise mitigation.”

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JULY 18, 2013

Two traffic study reports have been prepared for the Downtown Links project: the initial study in September 2008 and an update that was completed in January, 2013. The most current traffic projections for the Downtown Links, representing PAG's 2040 regional travel demand model, are lower than the 2030 model projections used in the 2008 study. The lowered 2040 regional traffic demand projections are primarily a result of a reduction in expected development in the downtown area. (Similarly, the Broadway: Euclid to Country Club project area was re-analyzed using the same PAG 2040 regional travel demand model - see 'Traffic Studies' at < <http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/broadway/broadway-documents-studies> >, particularly the 'August 30, 2012 Special Traffic Analysis'.)

Specific changes of note to the projections for the Downtown Links project include:

- The 2040 daily traffic demand on Barraza Aviation Parkway, south of Broadway Blvd, is 37,000 vehicles per day (vpd), as compared to the 2030 projection of 55,500 vpd.
- On the new Stevens Ave. connection between the Barraza Aviation Parkway and 6th Street, projected demand dropped from 41,000 vpd to 30,000 vpd.
- Similarly, the projected traffic demand on Broadway Blvd east of Barraza Aviation Parkway dropped from 51,000 vpd to 33,000 vpd.

Even though the traffic projections have dropped, the lower 2040 projections are higher than can be accommodated with the 4-lane roadway included in the RTA plan.. The design traffic volumes being used by the design team will only accommodate about 70% of future traffic projected.

Downtown Links Project Connection to the Broadway: Euclid to Country Club Project

- Downtown Links will extend the Barraza-Aviation Parkway, creating a new westbound on-ramp from Broadway to Links Avenue, just to the west of Euclid. Traffic will still be able to exit the Parkway onto Broadway, but the extension will allow westbound Broadway traffic an opportunity exit on to Stevens Avenue and circumvent the downtown area.
- The draft Downtown Links Urban Overlay District (UOD) has been touted as a leading example of how Tucson could approach future land use treatments using overlay districts. The overlay is still in draft form and has not yet been adopted by Council, but it has been reviewed at different committees. (You can find a draft online at: < <http://www.downtownlinks.info/LandUseUrbanDesign/documents/DLUODUpdateOctober2012.pdf> >.

Based on the recommendations emerging from the Streetcar Land Use and Development Study, it is likely the Downtown Links Urban Overlay District (UOD) will be expanded north along 4th Avenue, west along 6th Street, north along Stone Avenue, and southwest to include several key parcels south of the railroad tracks and west of Stone.

NOTE: Land use planning is currently not part of the Broadway: Euclid to Country Club project scope of work; however, it will be part of discussions with the Task Force. The project team anticipates that land use recommendations will be developed through our discussions that could inform a future overlay or other similar tool.

Attachments: July 2013 Downtown Links Project Update